

REMARKS:

Status of claims

Claims 1-10 are pending in the application. In the Office Action dated March 13, 2006, the Examiner

- 1) objected to the drawings for allegedly not showing every feature of the invention specified in the claims;
- 2) objected to the drawings as allegedly not showing structural details that are essential for a proper understanding of the disclosed invention;
- 3) rejected claims 2, 4, and 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite;
- 4) objected to the specification;
- 5) rejected claims 1, 3-5, and 9-10 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Niwa et al; and
- 6) rejected claims 1-2 and 5-9 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Margetak et al.

Amendments

In this amendment, paragraphs 11, 15, and 19 of the specification were amended in accordance with the Examiner's suggestions. Paragraph 18 was amended for clarity. No new matter was added.

Claim 1 was amended to include the limitations of original claims 2 and 3, for clarity, to overcome the 112 rejections, and to add the limitation that each of said first cushion cover, said second cushion cover, said membrane switch, and said supporting plate comprises perforations. This is not new matter; see elements 23 in FIGs. 1 and 4, and paragraph [0019] of the specification.

Claim 4 was amended to depend from amended claim 1 rather than canceled claim 3, for clarity, and to overcome the 112 rejection. No new matter was added.

Claims 2, 3, and 5-10 were canceled.

1) The objection to the drawings for not showing every feature in the claims

The Examiner stated that "the steering wheel and an outer frame part must be shown or the features canceled from the claims" (Page 2 of the Office Action dated March 13, 2006, under numeral 2).

Claims 5-10 have been canceled; therefore the steering wheel has been canceled from the claims.

Regarding the outer frame part, this has been amended in both the specification and claims to read “an edge of the membrane switch.” See FIG. 3 for support for the edge of the membrane switch 2 being supported by the plate protruder 21a in one embodiment of the present invention.

2) The objection to the drawings for not showing details essential for a proper understanding of the invention

The Examiner stated that “[t]he drawings...fail to show the perforations going through the first and second cushion covers, and [the] supporting plate....Also, the drawings fail to show or reference the outer frame” (Page 2 of the Office Action dated March 13, 2006, under numeral 3).

Regarding the perforations, see elements 23 in FIGs. 1 and 4. As perhaps best seen in FIG. 1, perforations 23 extend through, from top to bottom, second cushion cover 13, membrane switch 2, supporting plate 21, and first cushion cover 11. FIG. 4 shows a top view of these perforations, also extending through second cushion cover 13, membrane switch 2, supporting plate 21, and first cushion cover 11.

Regarding the outer frame, all mentions of the outer frame have been amended to read “an edge of the membrane switch.” See FIG. 3 for the edge of the membrane switch 2 being supported by the plate protruder 21a in one embodiment of the present invention.

3) The indefiniteness rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph

All mentions of first and second cushions were amended to read “first and second cushion covers,” in accordance with the Examiner’s suggestion.

Mentions of a “front side of a cushion cover” were deleted from the claims.

In claim 4, “said supporting plate is formed at one side with a plate protruder” was amended to read “said supporting plate comprises a plate protruder disposed on at least one side of said supporting plate.”

Claim 5 has been canceled.

4) The objections to the specification

All mentions of first and second cushions have been amended to read “first and second cushion covers,” in accordance with the suggestion of the Examiner.

5) Niwa et al: the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejections of claims 1, 3-5, and 9-10

Niwa et al. does not disclose or suggest perforations. A single cover member 10 (referred to by the Examiner as allegedly corresponding to both the inventive horn cover and cushion cover) has a rupture portion 12, ruptured to open when air bag 1 inflates; see column 3 lines 25-38 and FIGs. 1 and 6. Niwa et al. therefore does not disclose or suggest "each of said first cushion cover, said second cushion cover, said membrane switch, and said supporting plate comprises perforations." Claim 1, as well as its dependent, claim 4, is thus patentable over Niwa et al.

6) Margetak et al: the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejections of claims 1-2 and 5-9

Margetak et al. does not disclose or suggest perforations. Outer cover 40, referred to by the Examiner as allegedly corresponding to the inventive horn cover, has a rupturable portion defined by a stress riser 42; see column 2 line 64-column 3 line 5 and FIG. 2. Margetak et al. therefore does not disclose or suggest "each of said first cushion cover, said second cushion cover, said membrane switch, and said supporting plate comprises perforations." Claim 1, as well as its dependent, claim 4, is thus patentable over Margetak et al.

Conclusions

In view of the foregoing, Applicant believes all claims now pending in this application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Authorization is granted to charge any outstanding fees due at this time for the continued prosecution of this matter to Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP Deposit Account No. 50-0310 (matter no. 060945-0160).

Respectfully submitted,



Jessica C. Stahnke (Reg. No. 57,570)
for Thomas D. Kohler (Reg. No. 32,797)
MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS LLP
One Market, Spear Street Tower
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.442.1000

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